

1.0 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this programmatic biological assessment (BA) is to assess the potential effects to the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) from management actions included in 7 Resource Management Plans (RMPs) of the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Specific objectives of this biological assessment include the following:

- Summarize the biology of the wolf, including historic records and recently-mapped wolf packs in Wyoming;
- Review pertinent RMPs and identify proposed actions with the potential to affect the wolf;
- Assess the potential effects of management actions proposed in the RMPs on the wolf; and
- Prepare an effects determination for the wolf for each management action in each RMP.

The analysis area for each management action is based on the boundaries specified in the individual RMPs for the field office (FO). These boundaries are described in the analysis section for each RMP and shown in **Maps 7 - 12**. The determination for each management action is based on the nature of that action and on the available wolf data for the area that is affected by the management action.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report is organized into four sections, including the following:

- 1.0 Introduction – describes the purpose of the analysis, the scope of the biological assessment, the action area, and the methods.
- 2.0 Species Information – summarizes the current listing status, ecology, abundance, distribution, and threats to the wolf in Wyoming.
- 3.0 Analysis of Resource Management Plans – presents a summary of all the management actions at the front of the chapter, thus eliminating the need to repeat this information in the discussion of each FO; existing impact minimization measures; a description of wolf occurrence within the area affected by each RMP; an analysis of effects from each of the management prescriptions; and a determination specific to each management action for each RMP.
- 4.0 Conservation Strategies – presents conservation measures and best management practices developed specifically for this document.
- 5.0 References

METHODS

Each management action within 7 RMPs (**Table 1**) was reviewed to identify those with the potential to affect the wolf. For the Snake River Resource Area of the Pinedale Field Office (FO), management actions from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were evaluated. Wolf pack polygons were obtained as shape files from Joe Fontaine of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena, Montana. These shape files are the source for the maps posted on the internet for each annual report on the Wolf Recovery Plan (<http://westerngraywolf.fws.gov/index.htm>). Wolf information was evaluated and potential effects from the management actions were analyzed. Management actions were evaluated in terms of their potential to jeopardize the continued existence of the species. State, private, local, and tribal activities were also evaluated to assess their potential to cumulatively affect the wolf.

TABLE 1: RMPs ANALYZED IN WOLF BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Field Office	Resource Management Plan (Year Published)
Cody	Cody Resource Area Resource Management Plan (1990)
Kemmerer	Kemmerer Resource Management Plan (1986)
Lander	Lander Resource Management Plan (1987)
Pinedale	Pinedale Resource Management Plan (1988)
Pinedale	Snake River Draft Resource Management Plan EIS (2003)
Rock Springs	Green River Resource Management Plan (1997)
Worland	Grass Creek Resource Management Plan (1998)

After potential effects were identified, the results were used to establish a determination for each management action under each RMP. The analysis of potential impacts of BLM's ongoing activities is guided by the experimental nonessential status of the reintroduced population. Rules published in the Federal Register designate gray wolves in Wyoming as non-essential experimental populations under Section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. Within the designated areas described and depicted in the rules, all gray wolves will be managed in accordance with the prescribed provisions. Wolves designated as non-essential experimental that are not within units of the National Park or National Wildlife Refuge systems, but are within the boundaries of the non-essential experimental population area, are treated as proposed species for Section 7 consultation purposes.

Management direction provided in 50 CFR Part 17 indicates that there are no conflicts envisioned with any current or anticipated management action by BLM or other federal agencies. The same CFR also states that management of wolves in the experimental population would not cause major changes to existing private or public land use restrictions. Land use restrictions on public lands could be used, however, to control human intrusion of den sites when fewer than 6 breeding pairs exist within the experimental area.

Federal agencies are only required to confer with the USFWS when they determine that an action they authorize, fund, or carry out "is likely to jeopardize the continued existence" of the species. Thus the decision for each management action is whether the action:

- **Is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species – "Jeopardy"**

Or

- **Is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species – "No Jeopardy"**

These determinations are further defined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endangered Species Consultation Handbook (USFWS 1998). To “jeopardize the continued existence of “ is to engage in an action that reasonably would be expected, directly or indirectly, to reduce appreciably the likelihood of both the survival and recovery of a listed species in the wild by reducing the reproduction, numbers, or distribution of that species (50 CFR §402.02).